

ON CUE

The electronic newsletter of the Association of Community Theatres of Greater Cincinnati

Winter 2009/2010 Linda Roll, Editor email address

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As we progress through the 2009/2010 theatre season, let's take a moment to remember those who have left their mortal souls to shine among the stars. This has been a season of loss for many of you. Know that we all share your feelings. Our lives are richer for their being part of our theatre community as well as our families.

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Getting to know you.

IF you are wondering about the people who are in the forefront of ACT leadership, let's take a look at our newest president, Cathy Lutts

Cathy has represented ACT as the Awards Chairman for the last three years and served as ACT Representative for two years. She is extremely honored to serve as ACT President for the next three years and looks forward to working with all Community Theatre Organizations in the tri-state area.

Cathy has been an active member of community theatre since 1978 with various groups. Since that time she has served on the Board of Directors in the capacity of Vice President to chairman of Outreach, Director Selection, production, and social events; and is presently on the Board at Footlighters. Cathy has worked on almost every aspect in the production area in some capacity from ushering, cleaning, painting, producing, house managing, director selection, and acting. Over the years she has also produced *Working (twice)*, *Bye Bye Birdie*, *Sound of Music*, *Love Sex and the IRS*, Tuna Christmas and most recently 1776, just to name a few. Cathy was a professional singer on the road for many years before moving to Cincinnati. Acting and singing are her passions. She has been on stage throughout the Tri State area in over 60 productions from Anything Goes to Wally's Café; winning Orchid and OCTA awards. When not involved in community theatre, Cathy is currently a principal with Cincinnati Public Schools.

She has a great sense of humor and brings lots of enthusiasm to her job. When you see her, say hello and get to know her. You will be glad you did!

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OCTA BUSINESS

2009 OCTA conference wrap up

Well we did it! We showed the rest of the state how to throw a fun conference. AND we set a record for the amount of money that was raised. Up until this year, the most any conference cleared was \$10,000. This was for a conference in the NE region. We cleared \$14,105 dollars this year. And we did it with fewer numbers in attendance than in previous years. The entire committee did a great job of making sure that everyone who attended had a great time. Kudos to our region for another successful conference!

The 2010 conference will be held at the Holiday Inn French Quarter in Perrysburg, OH over Labor Day weekend. The theme this year is "A Salute to the 70's" 4 days of peace, love and theatre. Make plans now to attend and keep the fun rolling along.

Perhaps you don't wish to act, but your forte is in the technical side of theatre. Well, does OCTA have an award waiting for you! Whether you are a costumer, a set designer, a lighting designer, a sound designer, whatever your area is, there is a contest for you. If you direct your attention to the OCTA website, www.ohiocommunitytheatre.org, you will find all of the necessary information and forms for entering these contests. Just ask these people:

Outstanding in Set Design
Ray Persing
The Drama Workshop
The Movie Game

Costumes

**Faye Crawford
1st Place Winner - Individual Costume Design**

Outstanding in Presentation - Individual Costume Design
Outstanding in Concept
Outstanding in Execution of Critters
Outstanding in Design Renderings
Outstanding in Fabric Choice - Individual Costume Design
Outstanding in "Critter" Designs
Outstanding in Design Execution - Individual Costume Design
Beechmont Players, Inc *Hyronomous A. Frog*,

Cathy Ross
2nd Place - Individual Costume Design - Trio of Strippers
Excellence in Use of Materials - Individual Costume Design
Excellence in Renderings - Individual Costume Design
Cincinnati Music Theatre *Gypsy*

Elaine Michael
2nd Place - Overall Costume Coordination
Excellence in Costume Procurement - Overall Costume Coordination
Cincinnati Music Theatre *Gypsy*

Newsletters

Peggy Kenney & Jon Vater
The Footlighters, Inc. – *The Libretto*

Excellence in Use of Photography

Excellence in OCTA News

Excellence in Layout and Overall Quality

Excellence in Special Features for Footnotes

The awards are there, check them out and enter. Also look at the OCTA scholarships that are awarded and if you have an outstanding young person who is a candidate for the scholarship, please submit their application. All of these have deadlines and they are all listed on the website.

Speaking of the OCTA website, it is great to see it back up and working. Thanks to the great folks at UC for helping set this up and to Phil and Laureen Caitlin and Mason Community Players for providing the host site!

OCTA ON THE ROAD-

Important Message for all Southwest OCTA Theatres

This year the OCTA board is hitting the road and setting up “TOWN MEETINGS” in each region to discuss OCTA programs, policies etc plus answer any questions or concerns from member theatres. The SW reps are trying to set up the meeting for one of these dates and we would like to have your input on the date at the next ACT meeting on Tuesday, January 26th.

If you are unable to attend the meeting, please consult with your theater board and let me know your first and second choice via email, pkenney27@zoomtown.com by Wednesday, January 27th (I realize this is not a lot of time. but I have been sick and not working much on the computer)

The possible dates are:

MARCH 6 AFTERNOON MEETING

MARCH 27 PALM SUNDAY WEEKEND

APRIL 10, 17 or 24

Also I need for you to bring or email ASAP a copy of the mailing addresses of your theatre board. We want to make sure each one is personally invited to the town hall meeting.

Speaking of scholarships, let's not forget the ACT scholarships. The auditions were held on Saturday, January 23 at NKU.

22 Students auditioned from the University of Cincinnati (CCM), Northern Kentucky University, Indiana University, and Otterbein

Judges: Dianna L. Davis
Jackie Demaline
Norma Niinemets
Karl Resnick
Jim Stump

Accompanist Mark Femia
Scholarship Assistant: Ritch Stoops
Scholarship Chairperson: Dee Anne Bryll

In attendance: Cathy Lutts, Howard Mills, Howard Wacksman, Rilla Foster
Mills family members, Mikki Knoffer, Larry Weber, Wayne Kirsch, John Langley

And the 2010 ACT scholarship winners are:

ACT SCHOLARSHIP	Natasha Ashworth (CCM Musical Theatre)
Wacksman Scholarship	Katie Johannigman (CCM Musical Theatre)
Mills Scholarship	Joe Moeller (CCM Musical Theatre)
Alternate	Chris Blem (CCM Musical Theatre)
Freshman Scholarship	Chloe Williamson (Indiana University Musical Theatre)
Alternate Freshman	Molly Massa (CCM Drama)

Dee Anne Bryll and her team did a great job of putting this together for ACT. A big thank you goes to those who provide the various scholarships. Their support of the young people of community theatre is overwhelming. Congratulations to all the winners and may you bring what you learn back to your communities. (above information supplied by Dee Anne Bryll)

We also know that a lot of the community theatres offer their own scholarships. You guarantee the future of theatre and are to be applauded for your outreach!

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ODDS AND ENDS

Here is a little piece I found listed in Stage Directions Magazine concerning wireless microphones. Hopefully you are all aware of the change yet to come and are making strides to keep your theatre compliant.

FCC Declares 700 MHz Off-Limits

WASHINGTON, D.C.—On Friday, Jan. 15, the Federal Communications Commission adopted an Order and Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking prohibiting the further operation, distribution and sale of devices that operate in the 700 MHz frequency band. This area of frequencies, previously used by television channels in the "UHF" band of transmission, had been in ad hoc use by wireless microphones and other wireless data transmission devices (DMX, et al). The FCC order makes it clear that these unlicensed devices cannot continue to operate in this band as they may cause harmful interference to public safety entities and next generation consumers' devices that will be utilizing the 700 MHz frequency. Current users of equipment that use the 700 MHz frequency have until June 12, 2010, one year from the DTV transition, to change to complying equipment.

More information about this subject can be found in the online web version of the magazine. www.stage-directions.com

Another interesting article that showed up in my mailbox was this one:



Today, Americans for the Arts released its "National Arts Index 2009 - An Annual Measure of the Vitality of Arts and Culture in the United States." This exhaustive study is a must read for Boards and Administrators of arts organizations. AFA has made it possible to review the full report, a report summary, or a one-page overview at [Americans for the Arts](http://AmericansfortheArts.org).

This newsletter from Arts Management & Performance Solutions advocates a closer look at the state of the Arts and how it is, or isn't, funded in America.

One of the key facts in the AFA study is that between 2003 and 2008 one new arts organization was formed every three hours!!! And a third of them failed to make their budgets, even in their BEST years. (see New York Times AP coverage at [NYT-AFA](http://NYT-AFA.org)).

For those of us who have had the opportunity over many years to look at the state of the Arts with a broad view, it has been clear that there are just too many organizations trying to find a special niche, often driven by special niche grant funding.

Using orchestral music as an example, it seems especially in small to medium-sized communities that it is not enough to have one excellent, financially stable orchestra that serves a variety of audiences. Somehow it has been decided that there is "a need" for multiple orchestras specifically created to serve different tastes or unique market niches...usually competing for the same donated dollars and ticket buyers. And, with the exception of major metropolitan areas where you can't swing a stick without hitting a musician, many of these groups in the same community use the same musicians...the same people play in the symphony orchestra, the chamber orchestra, the baroque orchestra, the youth programming orchestra, the underserved population orchestra, etc., etc., etc. And individually, MOST of these organizations provide only part-time work for those musicians!

We have also come to believe that certain genres of music or theatre or dance can ONLY be performed well if there is a special organization created to do it. Sort of like going to a medical specialist for a procedure. Can't gifted and well-trained conductors and/or musicians play Romantic music and Baroque music equally well? Or, is there just a narrow interest in performing music for the organization's own satisfaction and not for the market that may (or may not) exist.

Regrettably, it is possible to lay at least some of the blame at the feet of funders themselves. Corporations, individuals, and especially Federal, state, and local funding agencies have become increasingly more restrictive in what they will support. The buzzwords of the 1990s and 2000s have been "programming for underserved communities." For example, donors increasingly say, "I will give you money to support a special program for children ages 6 to 11 who live in the inter-city and are of minority ethnicity." Great! These kids should have access to quality cultural programs just like everyone else. But what ACTUALLY happens is that new groups form to create this programming (one every three hours?) in order to get the donor's money. And in short order they implode from lack of a proper organizational structure, long-range planning, and existence of a broad constituency. OR, established organizations feel they must shift their staff time, marketing efforts, and fund-raising efforts away from their primary missions in order to create special programming to meet a funder's criteria. And by the way, often donors will support such programs even if the quality is very low! It often doesn't matter if the product is any GOOD. It just has to meet the criteria of "programming for underserved communities."

Finally, a brief comment about government arts funding. First, it is embarrassing how LITTLE per capita is spent by Federal, state, and local governments on cultural programs as compared to any other civilized nation in the world. Second, there has always been a disproportionate share of these funds going to organizations who don't need it to survive. The largest and most well-known arts institutions in America have the wealthiest constituencies in the

world, perfectly capable of funding their own programs with minimal or moderate government support. Might they have to adjust how they SPEND money if their government funding was trimmed? Probably! Just like everyone else!

At the same time, the cost of a ticket to attend a concert or event at such an organization is exorbitantly prohibitive to any "regular" citizen who would like to enjoy the experience of the best arts providers in America. So, hugely disproportionate amounts (to the tune of tens of millions of dollars) in government funds (your tax dollars and mine) are supporting organizations created BY the wealthy FOR the wealthy. Meanwhile, regional and community organizations that actually serve a broader (and more "underserved") constituency are left by the side of the road to struggle and compete against each other over limited private funding sources. Can you imagine how many small and medium-sized arts organizations in America could be SAVED with a reapportioning of the enormous annual government grants given to the marquee institutions?

How can these trends be changed in order to restore a truly vital cultural environment? The first step is to stay informed. Familiarize yourself with the data that is available in such studies as AFA's "National Arts Index." Compare the data and trends with your own weekly, monthly, and yearly challenges. Make your own assessment of how your organization stacks up and how you may need to change your own strategies in order to insure long-term stability and growth. And don't be afraid to step outside the box from the way you have always done business, make changes, and seek advice and counsel on how to reinvigorate your mission!

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IF you have any information you or your group wishes to share on these pages, please contact me and I will do my best to post it here!

